"Google doesn't teach you this."

11 POWERFUL METHODS TO REDUCE BOUNCE RATE IN GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Bounce rate is one of the most misunderstood metrics in Google Analytics.

HIMANSHU SHARMA
11 POWERFUL METHODS TO REDUCE BOUNCE RATE IN GOOGLE ANALYTICS

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About the author

**Himanshu Sharma** is the founder of [Optimize Smart](#), a UK based digital marketing consultancy which specializes in analytics consultation and conversion optimization.

Himanshu has more than ten years’ experience in SEO, PPC and web analytics. He holds a bachelors’ degree in Internet Science and is a certified web analyst. He is both Google Analytics and Google AdWords certified. He was nominated for a Digital Analytics Association award for excellence. The Digital Analytics Association is a world renowned not-for-profit association which helps organizations overcome the challenges of data acquisition and application.

Himanshu runs a popular blog on [OptimizeSmart.com](#) which gets more than a quarter of a million visits a month from over one hundred countries. He is the author of three bestselling books on conversion optimization, attribution modelling and email analytics:

![Book Covers]

He run a popular course on ‘Web Analytics’ on optimizesmart.com. Through this comprehensive course you will learn and master all of the elements that go into extracting insight from data and optimising the online performance of your business for sales and conversions. More than 500 students are currently enrolled in this course.
Your website conversion rate is low because majority of people come and leave your website without completing the actions/goals you desired (like making a purchase).

If people are not sticking around your website then it is highly unlikely that they will make a purchase or complete any other conversion. User engagement is the key to make your business more profitable.

Unique visitors won’t make your business more profitable, engaged visitors will. If you can figure out, exactly why people come and leave then you are going to get a high conversion rate.

One of the most effective way to optimize your conversion rate is to optimize your bounce rate. Bounce rate is one of the most useful metrics available in Google Analytics.

Through bounce rate you can effectively measure the quality of traffic on your website.

If you are getting crappy traffic through a marketing channel (SEO, PPC, Email, Display etc) then bounce rate will be the first to shout and alert you.

Then it depends upon you, how you interpret this metric and take actions.

Before I tell you the powerful methods to reduce bounce rate, let’s get on the same page about what bounce rate, really is.

In order to understand bounce rate, it is very important that you are absolutely sure about the metric, called ‘visit’ (or session).

**What is a Session?**

In Google Analytics a visit means a ‘web session’.
Web session is a period of interaction between a web browser and a web server. It is also a group of hits recorded for a user in a given time period.

A web session ends when a visitor closes his browser, remains inactive on a website for more than 30 minutes or at midnight.

A visitor can start two or more web sessions in a single day or over the course of days/weeks/months. That’s why the number of visits/sessions reported by Google Analytics is almost always higher than the number of reported visitors.

What is a single page visit?

Single page visit is a web session in which a visitor views only the single page of a website and then leaves the website from the landing page without browsing any further.

Layman definition of a Bounce Rate

Bounce rate is the percentage of single page visits (or web sessions) in which a person leaves your website from the landing page without browsing any further.

Geek definition of a Bounce Rate

Bounce rate is the percentage of single page visits in which only one GIF request is sent to the Google Analytics server.

I will explain it later what GIF request means and how it impacts your bounce rate.

Types of Bounce Rate
Google analytics calculates the bounce rate of a web page and bounce rate of a website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Entrances</th>
<th>Bounces</th>
<th>Bounce Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,424</td>
<td>2,070</td>
<td>85.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>41.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>65.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>84.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>94.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bounce rate of a web page** = total number of bounces on a page (in a given time period) / total number of entrances on the page (in the same time period).

For example in the chart above:

1. The bounce rate of the page 1 = \( \frac{\text{total bounces (2070)}}{\text{total entrances (2424)}} \times 100 = 85.40\% \)

2. The bounce rate of the home page ( / ) = \( \frac{\text{total bounces (171)}}{\text{total entrances (416)}} \times 100 = 41.11\% \)

**Bounce rate of a website** = total number of bounces across all the pages on the website in a given time period / total number of entrances across all the pages on the website (in the same time period).

For example in the chart above:

The bounce rate of the website = \( \frac{\text{total bounces (4039)}}{\text{total entrances (5400)}} \times 100 = 74.80\% \)
Note: As you can see from the calculations above, bounce rate of a web page/website has nothing to do with 'Time spent on a web page/website' (a common misconception about marketers and webmasters).

What are Bounces?

In Google analytics, bounces are number of single page visits resulting from a page and in each visit only one GIF request is sent to the Google Analytics Server.

What are Entrances?

In Google analytics, entrances are number of times visitors entered your site on the page.

GIF Request and Bounce Rate

Each time a page is loaded into a web browser, the Google Analytics tracking code (GATC) make a request for an invisible file called _utm.gif so that it can send the page view data to Google Analytics Server via this file.

The E-Commerce tracking code (ETC) can also make request for this file so that it can send the e-commerce data to Google Analytics server.

In addition to GATC and ETC, the Event tracking code, Virtual Pageviews and social interaction analytics tracking code can also make request for this file.

The GIF request is quite long.

Following is an example of a GIF Request:

https://www.google-analytics.com/__utm.gif?utmwv=5.6.0d&utms=2&utmn=534749212&utmhn=moz.com&utme=8(5!User-Type)9(5!visitor)11(5!2)&utmcs=UTF-
In short, the _utm.gif file can send following type of data to the Google Analytics server:

1. Page view data (like visits, visitors, avg. time on site etc)

2. E-Commerce data (transaction ID, Item code, item value etc)

3. Social Interaction data (like facebook likes, tweets etc)

4. Details of the tracked events (like click on the video play button, click on an external link etc)

**When a single page visit is not treated as a Bounce?**

In order to truly understand bounce rate optimization it is very important that you are absolutely clear about what is counted as bounce and what is not counted as bounce by Google Analytics.

In any scenario in which more than one GIF request is made in a web session (also called visit), the visit will not be treated as bounce by Google Analytics even if the visit is a single page visit.
In following scenarios, Google may not count a single page visit as a bounce:

#1. Event Tracking

A visitor lands on your website, triggers an event which is being tracked via event tracking code and then leaves the website from the landing page.

For example a visitor landed on a web page of your site, clicked on the video ‘play’ button (which you are tracking via event tracking code) and then left the website from the landing page without browsing any further.

The reason why Google will not treat this single page visit as a bounce is because two GIF request were made during the web session.

One GIF request was made by the Google Analytics tracking code (to send the pageview data) and second GIF request was made by the event tracking code (to send the details of the tracked event like number of clicks on the video ‘play’ button).

Needless to say, if you have implemented event tracking code on web pages, it can dramatically reduce bounce rate of your web pages and even your whole website. So you need to keep this in mind when you are analysing the bounce rate of a web page.

#2. Social Interactions Tracking

A visitor lands on your website, triggers a social event which is being tracked via social interaction analytics tracking code and then leave the website from the landing page.
For example a visitor landed on a web page of your site, read a blog post, shares it via social sharing button (which is being tracked) and then left the website from the landing page without browsing any further.

The reason why Google will not treat this single page visit as a bounce is because two GIF request were made during the web session.

One GIF request was made by the Google Analytics tracking code (to send the pageview data) and second GIF request was made by the social interaction analytics tracking code (to send social interaction data).

**#3 Auto execution of tracked events**

In case, a tracked event is automatically executed each time a page is loaded by a web browser then the single page visit won't be considered as bounce, as more than one GIF request has been made.

For example if you visit a web page and the video embed on the page automatically starts playing and you are tracking the click on the play button via event tracking code then more than one GIF request will be made: one request will be made by the Google Analytics Tracking Code and one GIF request will be made by the event tracking code.

So bounce rate of such web pages will always be 0%.

**#4. Multiple Google Analytics Tracking Code on a web page**

If a web page contains more than once instance of Google Analytics tracking code (like one tracking code in the header and one in the footer) then at least two GIF requests will be made.
Consequently even the single page visit won’t be treated as bounce. So make sure you have only one Google analytics tracking code on your web pages.

*When a single page visit is treated as bounce?*

**In following scenarios, Google may count a single page visit as a bounce**

(Provided only single GIF request has been made during the visit):

1. More than 30 minutes of inactivity on a web page (as a web session generally expires after 30 minutes)

2. A visitor closed the browser window after viewing a single page of your website.

3. A visitor clicked on the browser ‘Back’ button after viewing a single page of your website.

4. A visitor entered a new URL in the browser navigation bar after viewing a single page of your website.

5. A visitor clicked on an external link (which is not tracked by event tracking code) which takes him to another website after viewing a single page of your website.

6. Each time a web session gets killed – If a visitor is navigating from one web page to another and the web session gets killed for some reason then in this scenario the single page visit can be treated as bounce.

In following situations a web session can get killed:
#1 A visitor navigates to a web page which contains different Google analytics tracking code (may be the tracking code of some other website).

#2 A visitor navigates to a web page which does not contain Google analytics tracking code.

#3 A visitor navigates to a web page which contains Google analytics tracking code but the tracking code is not correct or is not executed for some reason.

**How to analyse and report Bounce Rates?**

You analyse and report the bounce rate in the similar way you analyse and report the conversion rates by segmenting your bounce rate and reporting bounce rate for each traffic source.

So the questions that you should be asking now are:

Q1. What is the bounce rate of the traffic from organic search campaigns?

Q2. What is the bounce rate of the traffic from PPC campaigns?

Q3. What is the bounce rate of the traffic from a particular referral?

Q4. What is the bounce rate of the traffic from email campaigns?

and not

Q What is the bounce rate of my website?

**How to interpret Bounce Rate?**

Bounce rate can **horribly mislead** you if you don’t know how to interpret it.
A high bounce rate is not always bad and sometimes even very low bounce rate can be bad.

For example it is common for Blogs to have a high bounce rate. As people read the blog post and then leave the website.

If the bounce rate of your website is very low may be like 10% than there may be some issue with your tracking code implementation or may be some other website issue in which more than one GIF request is made in a single page web session and hence Google is not considering such visits as bounce.

Whenever you interpret bounce rate of any traffic source, keep following things in mind:

1. **User Intent/ behavior**

   How people usually interact with your website. How your website should be used according to you

   If your landing page doesn’t satisfy a visitor’s query then also he will bounce from the landing page.

   On the other hand, if your landing page does satisfies a visitor’s query then also he can leave the website (provided you don’t give him another reason to continue browsing) and hence the bounce.

2. **Type of website**

   Different types of websites have got different bounce rate.

   For example if your website is a blog then it is common for your visitors to read and leave and hence high bounce rate.
If you have a single page website then bounce rate will always be 100%.

If you run a website which is purely built in flash and you don’t track flash events through event tracking then also your bounce rate will be very high as in majority of cases people don’t need to browse another page of the website.

3. Type of landing page

If a visitor lands on the ‘contact us’ page then he is most probably looking for contact information and therefore it is highly unlikely he will continue browsing. So bounce rate is going to be high.

4. Quality of the landing page

If you landing page is not visually appealing, full of ads, cluttered with text, looks spammy, doesn’t have clear ‘call to action’ then bounce rate is going to be high.

5. Type of content

If you have got hard to consume content on your landing page then a visitor may bookmark the page and return to the website later to read it in his spare time.

6. Type of Industry- Bounce rate varies from industry to industry. In some industries high bounce rate is considered to be normal.

7. Type of Traffic – If you are getting wrong type of traffic on your website like traffic which is not your target audience then the bounce rate is going to be high.

8. Type of marketing channel
Different marketing channels send traffic which tends to have different bounce rate. For example bounce rate of the traffic coming via social media sites is generally higher than the traffic coming from organic search.

9. **Visitor Type** - It is common for new visitors to bounce more than the returned visitors as they are not familiar with your brand.

10. **Device Type**

Bounce rate can vary from device to device. For example if your website is not mobile friendly then the mobile traffic to your website is going to have high bounce rate.

**Related Article:** [Adjusting Bounce Rate by Calculating Time spent on the Page](#)

**FAQs**

I have been asked following questions several times. So I think it is worth, sharing them:

**Q1. What is the difference between bounce rate and exit rate?**

Bounce rate applies to the entry page (the first page a person visits when he lands on your website). Whereas, exit rate applies to the exit page (the page from which a visitor leaves your website).

In case of exit rate it is not necessary for a visitor to leave the website from the entry page. He may have browsed lot of web pages prior to his exit.

Check out this [help article](#) from Google Analytics for more details.
Q2. What is a good / bad bounce rate?

Bounce rate depends upon on so many factors from user intent, visitor type, website type, industry to landing pages and device that it is impossible to label a bounce rate as good or bad without deep data analysis.

Q3. What is an average bounce rate?

It depends upon many factors as discussed above.

Q4. How I can exclude event tracking from bounce rate calculations?

If you don’t want your event tracking implementation to effect the bounce rate calculations of your web pages / website then set 'nonInteraction' to true or 1.

For example:

```html
<a href="https://www.abc.com/gu/dw/seo-beginners-guide.pdf" onClick="

  ga('send', {
  'hitType': 'event',
  'eventCategory': 'guides',
  'eventAction': 'download-seo',
  'eventLabel': 'seo-beginners-guide.pdf',
  'eventValue': 10,
  {'nonInteraction': 1}
  
  });

"">Download SEO Beginners Guide</a>
```

Now the million dollar question

*How to reduce bounce rate?*

Following methods can help you in reducing your website bounce rate.
1. Adjust the bounce rate of your website

The most powerful way to reduce bounce rate is to adjust it by calculating the time spent on a page.

In this way you can get true bounce rate. There are many situations in which you can get conversions through bounced visits.

For example it is pretty common in case of blogs, news and publishing sites for the visitors to come and leave from the landing page without browsing any further.

These visitors generally come to the website to read latest news/article and then leave the website from the landing page as there is no need to browse any further.

But since the visits are single page visits, Google Analytics will show 100% bounce rate.

When a visitor converts on your website then his visit should not be counted as bounce even if that visit is a single page visit.

This is because our primary reason of running a website is to get conversions and not to optimize bounce rates.

That is why you need to adjust your bounce rate. Once the adjustment has been made, you will see drastic reduction in your site's bounce rate esp. if you run a blog, news or publishing website. You can learn more about adjusting your bounce rate from the articles below:

1. Adjusting Bounce Rate by Calculating Time spent on the Page
2. **Adjusting Bounce Rate via Google Tag Manager**

2. **Reduce the bounce rate of the web pages in the Profit Index**

Profit index is a database of all the profitable pages on your website.

Profit Index contains all those web pages which are most frequently viewed prior to conversions or transactions. So if these web pages have got high bounce rate then it is going to significantly impact the conversion volume and conversion rate of your website.

You need to reduce the bounce rate of the pages in the profit index in order to improve conversions. Without profit index, you will remain busy optimizing the bounce rate of large volume of random webpages which may or may not impact the business bottomline.

But when you are using profit index, you are guaranteed that your [bounce rate optimization](#) is going to impact the business bottomline.

If you are not sure how to create profit index in Google Analytics then check out this article: [Optimizing Contents for Sales and Conversions through Profit Index](#)

Once you have created profit index and go to [profit index report](#) in Google Analytics and sort the table in decreasing order of Page Value:
Now click on the 'compare to site average' button at the top right of your Profit Index report and then select 'Bounce Rate' from the drop down menu.

Your report should now look like the one below:
You can see from the reports there are two web pages in the top 10 whose bounce rate is higher than the site average. You now need to find the reason for such high bounce rate.

3. Stop targeting keywords/marketing channels which are sending low value traffic

If your website is getting the traffic which has nothing to do with the products/services you sell then the website visitors are going to bounce the moment they arrive on your website.

Determine the traffic sources which are sending poor quality traffic and then either stop the campaign or target the right keywords/landing pages.
4. Create landing pages which satisfy visitor's query

If you are getting the right traffic but your landing page doesn't satisfy the visitor's query then the website visitors are going to bounce the moment they arrive on your website.

For example, a visitor is looking for information on 'courses on business management in London' and if your landing page gives general information about business management courses then the visitor is likely to bounce.

5. Create landing pages which prominently display your 'call to action'

If your landing pages lacks 'Call to Action' (CTA) or does not prominently display CTA, then you will have hard time keeping visitors on your website.

Headings, sub-headings and directional clues (to guide visitors to your CTA) are excellent way of prominently displaying your CTA.

For example, this blog post is about reducing bounce rate and this is prominently displayed through h2 heading.
6. Make your 'call to action' relevant to your landing page

Your call to action (CTA) can cause your visitors to come to your site and bounce. This call to action can be in the form of a button, banner, video or link on the pages of your site or some external site.

In case of organic search the call to action can be in the form of title tag and meta description tag of the landing page.

In case of paid search (like Google Adwords) the call to action can be in the form of title and description of your AdWords ad copy.

For example,

If your banner ad on a website reads 'Download your free seo book now' but then on a click takes a visitor to the home page of the site instead of the landing page which offers free download then expect high number of bounces.

You need to fulfil the promise you made to your website visitors in your search engine listing/ad copy or expect a high bounce rate.

So make sure that your CTA is relevant to your landing page.

7. Develop contents which can be consumed in short span of time
If your landing page perfectly satisfy the visitor's query but the content on the landing page is hard to consume in a short span of time then expect high bounce rate.

Even if some visitors are still interested in your content, they are still most likely to bounce as they may bookmark your page and choose to return later in a different visit to consume the contents. So aim to develop contents which can be consumed in short span of time.

8. Use Virtual Pageviews or Event Tracking for Ajax/Flash based contents

In case of Ajax/Flash based contents/website, lot of users’ interaction (like clicking on an image/link; loading of a page/flash video/pop up etc) take place on a single page. So in majority of cases visitors don't need to browse another page(s) on your website.

Consequently the bounce rate is very high. In case of purely flash based website, bounce rate will be 100% all the time if users’ interactions are not tracked with virtual pageviews or event tracking.

So you need to track users’ interactions through virtual pageviews or event tracking.
9. Create landing pages which are visually appealing and load fast

According to a recent research a visitor decides in 8 seconds or less whether to stay or leave your website.

Following are some of the main reason people leave your website from the landing page without browsing any further:

1. Poor webpage design (use of poor contrast: like black background, yellow text)

2. Poor Navigation

3. Not using a responsive layout. So landing pages become hard to read on devices with different screen resolutions.

4. Cluttering of ads or too many ads above the fold.

5. Too much text

6. Poor formatting (not using bold, italics, underline etc)

7. Little to no spacing between lines and paragraphs.

8. Lack of headings and sub-headings. Your very first headline must highlight the benefit of reading any further.
9. Landing pages which take forever to download. If this is the case then expect 100% bounce rate all the time.

10. Audio/video contents which auto play as soon as the page loads. This is very annoying for visitors. Avoid it at all cost.

Use unbounce or visual website optimizer to test different versions of your headings and landing pages.

10. Develop a need to explore your website further

Every visitor who comes to your site has some purpose (like looking for a particular information, making a purchase etc).

When this purpose is solved or unsolved, he leaves the website unless you give him some other purpose to browse your website further.

For e.g a person looking for information on your company may leave your website from the landing page if the landing page fully satisfy his query about your company.

If visit to the 'About us' page is one of your goal then you can get 100% conversion rate but with 100% bounce rate.

This is one of the reason why even top landing pages have high bounce rate.
Whether or not your landing page satisfies the visitor's intent, you must always provide few more options to continue browsing.

For example "If you like this article you may like these articles too" or "similar products" or "related posts" etc.

Similarly provide options to continue browsing 'post conversion' like by placing links to browse further on the 'thank you' page or some other goal page.

11. Run page level surveys

If everything else failed and you can't figure out what is wrong with your landing pages then you need to run page level surveys.

Add a thumbs up and thumb down button at the bottom of the landing pages (which don't require a login to be used) to get instant feedback from visitors regarding their reason for bounces.

If your landing page has got lot of thumbs down, then there is a problem with the content quality.

Use Qualaroo to get instant feedback through page level surveys.

The new Web Analytics Training Course

I have launched a new course on 'Web Analytics'. Through this comprehensive course you will learn and master all of the elements that go into extracting
insight from data and optimising the online performance of your business for sales and conversions.

- Learn to do a very focused and meaningful analysis from the very start
- Learn to quickly deliver recommendations and rapidly deploy solutions which solve your customers problem either wholly or in parts.
- Learn to adapt rapidly and cost efficiently in response to changes in the marketing environment by using Agile Analytics methodologies.
- Learn to achieve your business objectives within the area of your responsibility and expertise, and that too in the most efficient manner.
- Learn to create strategies, translate business objectives into measurable goals and improve business bottomline.

Take the Web Analytics Training Course